

## Discussion series summary: Effective partnerships

### What is the discussion series?

The discussion series is a peer-to-peer monthly sharing and learning event for [UK Aid Direct \(opens in new tab\)](#) and [UK Aid Match \(opens in new tab\)](#) grant holders. Based on grant holder topic requests, each month two grant holders, or downstream partners, who have relevant experience on the topic present their work and answer questions from fellow grant holders and downstream partners, before a wider discussion on the topic is held in smaller groups.

This summary is based on the session held in September 2020 on effective partnerships in international development.

### [Integrity Action \(opens in new tab\)](#)

#### Organisation information

Integrity Action (IA) is an international development organisation which helps citizens to monitor vital projects and services where they live, and to solve the problems they find.

#### Presentation

IA has two-way due diligence as part of its partnership process with all organisations and sets the tone for a reciprocal power dynamic. When drafting Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs), clauses are made to be reciprocal where appropriate, for example when it comes to sharing project relevant images. IA ensures that the grant holder is accountable upstream, to the fund manager, and downstream, to partners.

IA challenges the Global North to South capacity building assumption by working with partners to highlight the areas each organisation feels they have expertise to share with one another. IA emphasises to their partners that challenges are an opportunity to learn, encouraging transparency and trust. IA also works to close the 'feedback loop' with partners, following up on any feedback on the partnership.

### [The Leprosy Mission of England and Wales \(opens in new tab\)](#)

#### Organisation information

The Leprosy Mission of England and Wales (TLMEW) is a global Christian organisation fighting against leprosy and empowering people to attain healing, dignity and life in all its fullness.

## Presentation

At the start of a partnership, TLMEW creates an MoU with their partners which clearly states each party's roles, responsibilities and expectations of one another. TLMEW encourages its partners to do their own assessment of TLMEW, ensuring that the partner actively wants to partner with their organisation.

TLMEW works with the partner to identify what each organisation's strengths, experiences and weaknesses are. In this way the partnership can benefit from collaboration, drawing on and supporting each organisation's expertise.

TLMEW has regular, open communication with their partners. Decision making is always done together, mutually deciding on who will do what and by when. In addition to formal meetings, TLMEW finds that informal communication is crucial to identifying problems that need to be addressed.

[Link to the presentation slides \(opens in new tab\)](#)

## Key takeaways from the session

- Unequal partnerships are detrimental to project implementation: uneven power dynamics discourage ideas being put forward by all parties and may stop problems being reported.
- Implementing partners welcome conversations about power dynamics.
- Acknowledge that two-way capacity building is possible and will strengthen the work of a partnership: identify each organisation's areas of strength and utilise these within the partnership.
- Formal and informal communication is key to building trust amongst partners.
- Partnerships do not have to be led by organisations based in the Global North.
- Conduct and culture matters: ensuring a friendly, open and ongoing communicative environment will improve the strength of the partnership.

## Resources

- [3 practical ideas to shift the power in partnerships - BOND \(opens in new tab\)](#)

- [Bond and The Partnering Initiative's report on partnering trends for INGOs \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- [Bond's partnership resources \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- [The Partnering Initiative – Unleashing the power of partnerships for sustainable development \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- [NESTA's partnership toolkit \(opens in new tab\)](#)

**[More learning resources from the Discussion Series and from UK Aid Match can be found on our learning pages \(opens in new tab\)](#)**

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